

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHARITY TRUSTEE

RUMA SARKAR

TRUSTEE OF SHOUTOUT



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Why did you decide to join a charity board?

I wanted to join a charity board to apply my skills to issues that matter - to contribute meaningfully, help shape strategy, and learn from others who are equally committed to making an impact. I also recognise the ongoing struggle of improving diverse representation on boards, which pushed me to take the plunge. Joining Boardmatch's Future Board Leaders Programme, gave me a solid foundation in charity governance and helped me find the right fit in board opportunities.

I was already familiar with ShoutOut's impressive work promoting LGBTQ+ inclusion through education, so joining the board felt like a natural fit. Even though it is a relatively new organisation that started in 2012, ShoutOut has made significant strides in its mission to combat anti-LGBTQ+ bullying and violence through workshops and support programmes in schools, workplaces, and communities across Ireland. The dedication of ShoutOut's volunteers, staff and board is truly inspiring.

What are your typical tasks and duties on the board?

The primary duty as a board member is governance - making sure the charity's direction and management stays aligned with its mission, operates ethically, and remains financially sound. Beyond governance, there are plenty of other ways to get involved like joining subcommittees of a board (eg. HR or Finance & Audit subcommittee), helping with recruitment, policy development or supporting events. I'm on the Communications & Development subcommittee, where we oversee ShoutOut's outreach, engagement, and funding strategies.

What has challenged you in your trustee role?

I joined the board during a time of big changes, which meant there were major decisions to make, important questions to tackle, and crucial discussions underway. It was challenging to find ways to contribute meaningfully while still getting familiar with everything. I really appreciated the support from the board and CEO in helping me get up to speed and settle into the role. Our board is very focused on building expertise; we regularly share training resources with each other, which has helped me gain valuable knowledge along the way.

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What has been the biggest reward or benefit in becoming a trustee?

The biggest reward has been contributing to ShoutOut's mission and hopefully making a lasting impact in our communities. I've also loved the opportunity to learn from diverse perspectives and skills that differ from my own. Our board is made up of people with a wealth of professional and life experiences from various roles and sectors, which makes it a really enriching environment. Since I'm interested in pursuing board roles in the future, gaining this experience has been invaluable.

What would you say to someone thinking about joining a charity board?

Don't hesitate—just hit that Apply button! You can make a real difference for the charity while gaining valuable experiences that contribute to your growth. It's a win-win! Charity boards are eager for a variety of skills and experiences, so if you're passionate about a particular cause, take that leap and get involved!